

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

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JACKET WORN BY OLIVER HAZARD PERRY
AT THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

In the Society's Museum.

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Roger Williams' Contribution to Modern Thought

By FREDERICK BERNAYS WIENER

Read before the Society on February 5, 1931

On the 5th of February, in the year 1631, the good ship "Lyon" dropped anchor off Nantasket; and John Winthrop noted in his Journal that among her passengers she carried one "Mr. Williams, a godly minister."

Today we celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of Roger Williams' arrival in America. But I take it it is not simply to mark the passage of time that we are met tonight. When we celebrate the coming to the New World of him who founded our State, necessarily we must commemorate the ideas and thoughts which he expounded, and the principles with which his name is inseparably associated. These principles, those ideas and thoughts, still live today—not as archaic survivals, but as vital, time-tested truths. We believe in them today, and I suppose that means they are modern. That is an adjective which lately has been much

abused. For a time, every new fad, every shiny novelty, every ephemeral bit of superficial froth, has called itself modern; and consequently the word has been suspect, and, under the circumstances, doubtless rightly so. But I mean by modern, in its best sense, that which combines the utmost of enlightenment with the utmost respect for ancient truths—for there are ancient truths as well as ancient prejudices—which is to say, the utmost progressiveness compatible with progress.

So much has been written about Roger Williams—and doubtless much more said, which was not deemed worth preserving—that one approaches the subject with hesitation, almost with reluctance. But there may still be justification for an attempt. For, like an ancient formula grown meaningless with constant repetition, so has it been with the story of Roger Williams: the obvious facts of his life have been so often told that their reiteration almost has deadened our sensibilities, and we are in danger, in our preoccupation with the story, of losing and forgetting its significance. Too often our reaction to Roger Williams is a condescending shrug: "Great man," we murmur, "far ahead of his time,"—quite oblivious to the fact that he is still in many aspects ahead of our time as well, and that for a number of his ideas we ourselves are not, for the most part, wholly prepared.

I shall not try, in attempting to outline some of those ideas, to "reinterpret" Roger Williams. There is something false and specious about that term, and generally it is synonymous with "misinterpret." Just as a biography inevitably shades into an autobiography, so a history usually shows more than traces of the historian; and it is matter of common knowledge that historical writing has often been more actuated by a desire to prove a thesis already formulated, than by the scientific urge to discover "*Wie es eigentlich gewesen war*." I shall hope, therefore, to escape the charge of presenting the subject to fit my own preconceived notions; and equally, I hope to avoid that untruthful gloss which, so it seems, all too often accompanies celebrations. Certainly

it is not necessary to have to warn this Society of the dangers of the "filio-pietistic" approach to the past, or to remind you, as Charles Francis Adams had to remind his colleagues in Massachusetts, that historical societies are after all scientific bodies. It may be that the ancestor worship to the north and east of us is one of those bits of Chinese culture that the Canton merchants brought back to Salem; I do not know. But I have observed that it is easier to speak of the founders of Rhode Island without the gloss of reverent and euphemistic apology than it is to treat of those of Massachusetts, and I conclude, and doubtless you will not quarrel with the conclusion, that the former were a more attractive set of people.

I shall not undertake to tell you of Roger Williams' life. But I do wish to linger for a moment on what for us is perhaps the most significant event, and the most dramatic, of all his significant and dramatic life: I mean his banishment from Massachusetts.

Williams' banishment—or enlargement, as it is more usually referred to in a neighboring Commonwealth—came as the climax of a storm that had been brewing for some time. No sooner had Williams returned to Salem from Plymouth in the fall of 1633 than he began that almost constant dispute with the theocracy which did not end until he found himself wandering in the snow, cast out into the wilderness. I shall not treat in any detail of his minor disputes—his discussion of whether women should go veiled, his arguments that the English churches were un-Christian, his contention that the meetings of ministers would engender a "presbytery or superintendency to the prejudice of the church's liberty." The best that can be said of some of these manifestations of an admittedly contentious temperament is that they are incidents of Williams' "*Sturm und Drang*" period. Not much more can be said for his insistence (which stirred John Endecott to action) that the red cross of St. George must be cut out of the flag. It is with Williams'

remaining beliefs, which more directly caused his exile, that we have our concern; and these stand on other ground.

Roger Williams proclaimed that the Massachusetts Charter was invalid as a grant of title, in that it failed to recognize the rights of the Indians; and he announced certain of its recitals, declaring King James to be the first Christian prince to have discovered this country, to be solemn public lies. These declarations, in the face of news that a governor-general might be appointed, wrought consternation among the magistrates. When they then attempted to secure the loyalty of the people through an Oath of fidelity, they were met by Williams' contention that the oath was an act of prayer, and that it should not be tendered an unregenerate man. Accordingly, in order to punish the Salem church for the conduct of its minister, the magistrates refused to set off land to it; Williams appealed to the other churches, and roundly denounced the authorities. And, furthermore, he had attacked the very foundations of the theocracy; he had declared, in words that Winthrop has preserved for us, "That the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first table, otherwise than in such cases as did disturb the civil peace." (The first table of Decalogue, of course, consists of the first four Commandments which define the duties of man to God; the second table deals with duties between man and man.)

There was little more for the General Court to do. It appointed disputants to argue with Williams, knowing full well that these could not possibly hope to convince him. The solemn farce dragged on a while; the only issue, in this as in all other state trials, everywhere and in all ages, was, "Is this the kind of man that we want to get rid of?" And as that question had already been answered, the judgment of banishment was passed, "all the ministers, save one, approving the sentence."

Was the banishment illegal? Or was it justified by that clause of the charter which gave the Massachusetts Bay power "to expulse all such person and persons as should at

any time attempt or enterprise detriment or annoyance to their plantation or its inhabitants"? For myself, I incline to think that it was thus justified, that the action taken was perfectly proper from a legal standpoint. Whether it was a wise thing to do is quite another question, as I shall hope presently to show; but it is worth noting that a great many of the tyrannies of this world have proceeded under color of law. It is now abundantly clear, for instance, that Parliament was well within its powers in taxing the Colonies; and lest that remark should unduly alarm you, I would recall to your attention that almost all of the colonial lawyers were Tories. Their legal learning told them Parliament was right, and they had not the wit to realize how wrong it was none the less.

But back to Roger Williams. The other, and perhaps most burning question connected with his banishment, is whether the cause of his expulsion was political or religious. On this point controversy has ranged long and fiercely. The loyal Rhode Islander would stoutly maintain that the causes were purely religious; the son of Massachusetts would as vehemently assert that the operative reasons were entirely political. It seems to me that neither is wrong, and that each is partially right. But in truth, it is impossible thus to dissect the matter, for in a theocracy the religious and political are inseparably and indistinguishably blended. That is of the essence of theocracy. Political, religious—those are simply two aspects of the same thing, and to insist on one to the total exclusion of the other is not of much assistance either in posing or in solving the problem.

It is interesting in passing to observe that a contemporary called the Massachusetts practice of punishing religious opinions "as breaches of the civill peace and disturbances to the Commonwealth," "a pretty fine distinction to deceive themselves with." Those were the words, not of a follower of Roger Williams, but of the Rev. Thomas Edwards, an adversary, who in his time attacked Williams under the resounding title, "Casting down of the last and strongest

hold of Satan; or, A treatise against toleration and pretended liberty of conscience."

I think it may be said with perfect truth that Williams was expelled for spreading ideas that were unpopular with the rulers of the colony, and for uttering those ideas publicly. The strongest evidence in support of this statement is the record of the General Court itself, which surely would not understate Williams' offenses:

"Whereas [it recites] M^r Roger Williams, one of the elders of the church of Salem, hath broached & dyvulged divers newe dangerous opinions, against the auctoritie of magistrates, as also writ lres of defamacon, both of the magistrates & churches here, & that before any conviccon & yet mainetaineth the same without retraccon, it is therefore ordered that the said M^r Williams shall depte out of this juristiccon within sixe weekes nexte ensuing * * *

Now, what were these "newe and dangerous opinions"? It is there that we must seek the cause of his banishment, and it seems to me that the evidence supports the classical Rhode Island view, that Williams was expelled for his advocacy of Soul Liberty, for his assertion that the magistrate should not punish for matters of conscience. Of late years this view has been questioned, and modern writers have all but demolished it. But let us see.

Let us begin with the record. That recites that Williams spoke "against the auctoritie of magistrates." This is entirely consistent with the notion that he would have limited "the auctoritie of magistrates" to temporal matters; but obviously it is ambiguous. Let us then go beyond the record, and examine unofficial testimony.

Winthrop in his Journal noted down the "divers dangerous opinions" for which Williams was under question, and first among them he put that respecting liberty of conscience, in words which I have already quoted. That would seem to be a strong indication of the importance Winthrop attached to the matter.

Then there is John Cotton, a power in the theocracy, who also catalogued Williams' opinions. One of those was, in

Cotton's words, "that Civill Magistrates power extends only to the Bodies, and Goods and outward state of man &c."; and Williams himself agreed that Cotton's summary was accurate.

We have then four sources: the record, Winthrop, Cotton, and Williams (concurring with Cotton). The last three are all agreed as to Liberty of Conscience being a cause of the banishment, and the record does not dispute them. It seems to me that the cumulative effect is very weighty, and while this analysis can hardly be the last word in so contested a matter, I find it more convincing than the usual inquiry which seeks to divide the problem into political or religious.

And after all, though Williams' other arguments were annoying, and might cause the Bay trouble at home, his plea for Liberty of Conscience shook at the very foundation of theocracy. The Massachusetts leaders saw that clearly, and hence they banished him—not so much, perhaps, by way of punishment, but more to protect their anomalous institution. They knew their church-state could not weather the storm of Roger Williams' ideas, and so against those they never relaxed their strict quarantine.

I shall not now essay to trace the origins of the idea or religious liberty, or to seek the faint beginnings of the thought that church and state were better separated. Well before Williams various individuals had stumbled upon the idea, had published it in fugitive pamphlets, or, perhaps, disseminated it within small circles. But Roger Williams, though not the first to discover the principles of religious liberty, was the first to proclaim them in all their plenitude, and to build upon them a political state. Today we regard religious liberty and separation of church and state as axiomatic—which is to say modern—and we find it difficult to conceive of living under any other system. It is such a sensible solution, and such a simple one. Even so sharp a critic as Professor Harold Laski — who would be called modern

under any definition—believes it to be the only manageable way.

"I cannot avoid the conclusion [he writes in 'Liberty in the Modern State'] that in this historic realm only the American principle of complete separation and non-interference can produce freedom. Unless state and church pursue an independent path, liberty is sacrificed; for either fusion or partnership will, in fact, involve a conflict for supremacy."

And this "American principle," I need not remind you, was the principle formulated by Roger Williams in 1644, in his work, "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience." Here are his own words:

"All Civill States with their Officers of Justice in their respective constitutions and administrations are proved essentially Civill, and therefore not Judges, Governours or Defendeurs of the Spirituall or Christian state or Worship. * * * It is the will and command of God, that (since the coming of his Sonne the Lord Jesus) a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or Antichristian consciences and worships, bee granted to all men in all Nations and Countries: and they are onely to bee fought against with that Sword which is only (in soule matters able to conquer, to wit, the Sword of Gods Spirit, the Word of God. * * * God requireth not an uniformity of Religion to be inacted and inforced in any civill state; Which inforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civill Warre, ravishing of consciences, persecuting of Christ Jesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisie and destruction of millions of souls. * * * An inforced uniformity of Religion throughout a Nation or civill state, confounds the Civill and Religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh. * * * True civility and Christianity may both flourish in a state or Kingdom, notwithstanding the permission of divers and contrary consciences, either of Jews or Gentiles."

But Williams understood fully that authority was necessary in civil things. You will remember, even when he first announced that the jurisdiction of the state should not extend to religious matters, that he made the important qualification: "* * * otherwise than in such cases as did disturb the civil peace." It is a matter for admiring amazement, for me at any rate, that Roger Williams should have seen so

clearly, at the very start, the limitations of the new, astonishing idea which he proclaimed. I marvel at the wisdom of the man, that he should, long before the notion could possibly be tried out, foresee its probable and proper extent. That he should later discover it, is, of course, not half so remarkable, although his phrasing of the problem has become classical. Let me read you his "Parable of the Ship of State":

"There goes many a ship to sea, with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination or society. It hath fallen out sometimes, that both papists and protestants, Jews and Turks, may be embarked in one ship; upon which proposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges—that none of the papists, protestants, Jews, or Turks, be forced to come to the ship's prayers and worship, nor compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace and sobriety be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their services, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help, in person or purse, toward the common charges of defence; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace and preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers, nor corrections nor punishments, no laws nor orders, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits."

Another passage is equally well known:

"The Church or company of worshippers (whether true or false) is like unto a Body of Colledge of Physitians in a Citie; like unto a Corporation, Society, or company of East-Indie or Turkie Merchands, or any other Societie or Company in London: which Companies may hold their Courts, keep their Records, hold disputations; and in matters concerning their societie, may dissent, divide, break into Schismes and Factions,

sue and implead each other at the Laws, yea wholly break up and dissolve into pieces and nothing, and yet the peace of the Citie not be in the least measure impaired or disturbed; because the essence or being of the Citie, and so the well-being and peace thereof is essentially distinct from those particular Societies; the Citie-Courts, Citie-Lawes, Citie-punishments distinct from theirs. The Citie was before them, and stands absolute and intire, when such a Corporation or Society is taken down."

The passages already quoted deal with the separation of state and church in practice. In theory, maintained Williams, the two were also separate, and for the good reason that their aims were different. The magistrate tended the bodies of men; the minister to their souls. And hence a state church, or a church-state, was a confusion.

"For as it would be confusion for the church to censure such [civil] matters, and so such persons as belong to the church: So it is confusion for the state to punish spirituall offenders, for they are not within the sphear of a civil jurisdiction. The body or Commonweal is meerly civil, the Magistrate or head is a civil head, and each member is a civil member: and so far forth as any of this civil body are spiritual, or act spiritually, they and their actions fall under a spiritual cognizance and judicature."

I shall not elaborate further on the theme; but I only want to mention again that these lines were written nearly three centuries ago, when loyalty to state presupposed loyalty to church, and when it was implicitly believed by almost every one that civil government was impossible unless there be religious uniformity. The Thirty Years War was still raging when the *Bloudy Tenent* appeared. Its ideas at the time were visionary, fantastic, incendiary: the English Parliament ordered the book burned. But, here in Rhode Island, in Providence, on Aquidneck, and later at Warwick, Soul Liberty was tried. It worked—and after all, the only test of any idea is the pragmatic one. As Mr. Justice Holmes remarked upon a memorable occasion, "The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market."

In Rhode Island, the first instance of religious liberty in action is to be found in Providence Compact, by which the inhabitants bound themselves "Only in civill things." And, on Aquidneck, in 1641, it was ordered "that none be accounted a delinquent for Doctrine." The first, or Providence Plantations, charter, could say nothing about conscience, as the Parliament that granted it was hostile to Toleration, but the first laws enacted under that charter, the Code of 1647, left no doubts in the matter. The main body of laws concludes with words whose simple impressiveness even today cannot fail to awe.

"These are the Lawes that concern all men, and these are the Penalties for the transgression thereof, which by common consent are Ratified and Established throwout this whole Colonie: And otherwise than that what is forbidden, all men may walk as their conscience perswade them, every man in the name of his God."

Here, expressed in the quiet poetry of seventeenth century prose, was the "Rhode Island Idea," which before long was confirmed in the provisions of the charter of 1663. In that instrument it was expressly declared, in words that might have been, and perhaps were, written by Roger Williams himself,

"that no person within the said Colony * * * shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences in opinion in matters of religion, that do not actually disturbe the civil peace, but that all and every person and persons may * * * freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgments and consciences, in matters of religious concerns, * * * they behaving themselves peaceably and quietly, and not using this liberty to licentiousness and profaneness nor to the civil injury or outward disturbance of others * * * "

And that charter contained also those glorious, sonorous words which have been carried into our Constitution and now are graven over the portico of our State House, there to look down upon and counsel the generations yet to come:

"To hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing

civil state may stand and best be maintained with full liberty in religious concerns."

And now we are ready to consider Roger Williams' political views. These have been too long ignored, partly because a certain school of history saw in every mention of Williams' political opinions the sly and subtle machinations of the Massachusetts; and partly also, no doubt, because Roger Williams by and large is heavy reading, and the thought of digging through "The Bloody Tenent", to name no others, was not encouraging. But of late years we have had testimony, from unbiased and wholly disinterested sources, concerning the political wisdom of Roger Williams and his place among political thinkers. One Dr. Jellinek successfully maintained the thesis that it was Roger Williams, not Voltaire or the other eighteenth century philosophers, who was the author of the Rights of Man, and hence the spiritual father of the French Revolution. A Dr. Freund, but a few years since, asserted most convincingly that Williams was the foremost exponent of liberty of conscience and the rights of man in the English Revolution. Even more recently, Dr. James E. Ernst published his comprehensive work on Williams' political thought; and just the other day, in the latest number of the Rhode Island Historical *Collections*, Dr. Ernst has traced the tremendous influence of Williams' "Bloody Tenent" on the pamphleteers of the English Revolution, and hence on that great political movement itself.

I suppose that the keystone of Roger Williams' political arch was the idea that the state exists for man, and not man for the state. As a corollary to this fundamental thought, Williams maintained that the people were sovereign. They were the state. In Williams' own words:

"Whereas they say, that the Civill Power may erect and establish what forme of civill Government may seem in Wisdome most meet, I acknowledge the Proposition to be most true. * * * But from this Grant I infer, (as before hath been touched) that the Sovereign, original, and foundation of Civill power lies in the People, (whom they must needs mean by the

civill power distinct from the Government set up.) And if so, that a People may erect and establish what forme of Government seemes to them most meete for their civill condition: It is evident that such Governments as are by them erected and established, have no more power, nor for no longer time, then the civill power or people consenting and agreeing shall betrust them with. This is cleere not only in Reason, but in the experience of all commonweales, where the people are not deprived of their naturall freedom by the power of the tyrants."

These were not idle speculations; they were ideas that had already been put into practice. The General Court for Portsmouth and Newport in 1641 declared its institutions "a Democracie or Popular Government"; and even earlier, in 1637, the Providence settlers had signed a solemn compact "to subject ourselves, in active or passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for public good of the body, in an orderly way, by the major assent of the present Inhabitants * * * and others whome they shall admitt unto them."

It is one of the glories of Roger Williams' political ideas that they were the product, not of a cloistered scholar musing in his cell, but of an intensely active man, who carried out his thoughts in practice, and successfully subjected them to the acid test of actual experience.

Williams was careful always to point out that the powers of the State extended only to civil things, but those proper functions he did not limit in any narrow doctrinaire fashion. His views approached closely some which have been formulated only in the last decade or so, and which conceive the state to be nothing more than a species of public service corporation, simply more magnificent and larger in scope than most. An unromantic thought, if you will, but one which flows naturally and easily from Roger Williams' primary conception that the state is made for man. This idea, as Dr. Ernst points out,

"is resident in such terms as: * * * common safety, common welfare, * * * public good, preservation of peace and order, common peace and subsistence, common peace and liberty, * * * and minister and servant. In his letter to Providence,

in 1651, [Roger Williams] emphasizes the public service in settlement of controversies, care of orphans, widows, the poor and the insane; in a letter, in 1667, he encourages the building of roads and bridges. At other times, he requests the regulation of trade, commerce, industry, the liquor traffic with the Indians and the citizens, and the protection of cattle from wild beasts."

At a time when some people are urging, for various ends, that the functions of government be limited, arguing in reliance on supposed inherent principles which turn out to be imaginary over-simplifications of half-understood doctrine, it is refreshing to turn to Roger Williams, to note his solutions, and to observe that his theories were sufficiently broad to allow the state to serve all public needs. Doubtless Williams would heartily concur with the penetrating observations of a recent writer: "Government is itself an art, one of the subtlest of the arts. It is neither business, nor technology, nor applied science. It is the art of making men live together in peace and with reasonable happiness."

Some other ideas of Roger Williams I have but time to hint at: his views on the distribution of local and central authority, on the necessity of fluidity in government, on the relation of states to each other, on liberty. It is interesting to note in passing that he anticipated James Otis by nearly a century. In 1680 he wrote to the citizens of Providence: "There is no man that hath a vote in town or colony, but he hath a hand in making the rates by himself or his deputies." It is even more interesting to observe that in this same letter, written when he could look upon the world with the placid wisdom of age, Williams stressed the necessity of government not as an evil to be tolerated, but as an institution affirmatively good, because it emanated from the people.

"Government and order in families, towns, etc., is the ordinance of the Most High, Rom. 13, for the peace and good of mankind. * * * Mankind cannot keep together without some government. * * * That there is no man in the world, except robbers, pirates and rebels but doth submit to government. Even robbers, pirates and rebels themselves cannot hold together, but by some law among themselves and government. One of these

two great laws of the world must prevail, either that of judges and justices of peace in courts of peace, or law of arms, the sword and blood. * * * 'Till matters come to a settled government, no man is ordinarily sure of his house, goods, lands, cattle, wife, children, life."

And with a pardonable show of pride he added, "our Charter excels all in New England as to the Souls of men."

Rhode Island enjoyed, he asserted, "such Peace, such Security, such Liberties of Soule and Body as were never enjoyed by any English men, nor any in the World I have heard of."

And yet his very successes were charged against him as faults; in 1650 he wrote, "I have been charged with folly for that freedom and libertie which I have always stood for; I say liberty and equalitie both in land and government." Furthermore, Roger Williams has been charged with sundry inconsistencies. You remember the case of Joshua Verin, who kept his wife from attending Williams' religious services. This was a breach of the rule guaranteeing liberty of conscience, and Verin was accordingly disfranchised. But, maintained the miller, "when he consented to that order he never intended it should extend to the breach of any ordinance of God, such as the subjection of wives to their husbands"; at any rate, Verin asserted he had acted "out of conscience." Hence it was said that Williams was inconsistent. Further, Roger Williams had charged William Harris with treason for writing against the Rhode Island charter; yet Williams himself had written against the Massachusetts charter. And finally, despite his espousals of religious liberty, he had inveighed against the Quakers, and had threatened them with imprisonment for their use of "thee" and "thou" and for their refusal to uncover.

As to the Harris incident, it need only be remarked that there are charters of all sorts, and that the one granted Rhode Island had not the faults which Williams earlier exposed in Massachusetts. It did not disregard the Indians' rights. The other two events, it seems to me, do not invalidate the principle at all, or smack of inconsistency. (The

virtue of consistency, I take it, is the proof it affords that a man believes in the worth of an idea, and does not twist it to serve his changing ends.) They illustrate simply a difficulty inherent in human affairs, the difficulty of drawing a line. "Otherwise than in such cases as did disturb the civil peace,"—and obviously there can be different opinions about what cases are disturbing. That Williams drew the line differently than we should perhaps draw it today, I can attribute only to the fact that he, like all of us, was only human. And, to quote an acute critic, "If we focus attention on the human origin of all government, we shall have a more scientific temper for dealing with its frailties." Much the same is the biblical thought: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels."

So I do not believe that the incident of the Quakers is the blot on Williams' name that some have contended it was. Quite to the contrary, I think there is something remarkable and admirable in Roger Williams' conduct: with one breath he bids the Quakers welcome, sheltering them from the persecution and death that was their lot elsewhere; with the next breath he argues against their doctrines until he is hoarse. It seems to me that he personifies Voltaire's words in the following century: "I wholly disagree with what you say, and will defend to the death your right to say it!"

Is it any wonder that such a man was not understood by his time, that he represented something irrational, that he was called an incendiary, one with windmills in his head? And after all, some of his ideas have not even yet met with more than partial approval. Here is a passage from the *Bloudy Tenent*:

"It is a truth, the mischief of a blinde Pharises blinde guidance is greater then if he acted Treasons, Murders, &c. and the losse of one soule by his seduction is a greater mischief then if he blew up Parliaments, and cuts the throats of Kings or Emperours, so pretious is that invaluable Jewell of a Soul, above all the present lives and bodies of all the men in the world!"

These words were written while Charles the First still had

his head. I beg you compare them with a sentence published within the year, from Harold Laski's book:

"Liberty [writes Mr. Laski] cannot help being a courage to resist the demands of power at some point that is decisive; and, because of this, liberty, also, is an inescapable doctrine of contingent anarchy."

The parallelism is striking, and not less striking is the fact that the latter writer, also, was in effect "enlarged" out of Massachusetts.

After all, the case of Roger Williams is but another illustration of the difficulty of adjusting the fundamental relation between man and society, between the individual and the group. On the one hand there is the feeling of the herd, instinctive and hence deep-rooted, that will not tolerate deviations from the herd norm. At the other extreme is the desire of the individual to assert himself, to live his own life and to think his own thoughts. Between these two conceptions of life there is a chasm that cannot be bridged; the difference is irreconcilable. It is the struggle between heart and head; it is the conflict between conformity and non-conformity, between concurrence and dissent. And so long as in each human being reason is blended with emotion, who shall say which is right?

President Faunce, in the ripeness of his wisdom, would often admonish us to "conform in little things." But what of large things, what of ideas that move the thinkers? Each must decide that for himself. It is not enough, I fear, to suggest that they be not uttered, to echo the remark of the medieval judge, that "the devil himself knoweth not the thought of man," or to urge, as did Walter Pater, that a civilized man carries his ideas lightly. For when we come to grips with this insoluble problem of conformity or dissent, we deal with men who do not toy with ideas, who cannot equivocate and who will not be silenced, who like Martin Luther before the Diet cry out, "*Ich kann nicht anders*"—I can not do otherwise—and who, like Roger Williams, will cheerfully grapple with privation and bravely look into the

face of death. And yet—and yet—but few dissenters have the stature of a Luther or a Williams.

Judge Learned Hand has put the matter very well:

“And so, poor wights, we cling to what custom gives, and insist upon the verity of what we tremble to uncover and forbid others to dispute. The heretic who dares to lay impious hand upon our arks has always been our enemy, and perhaps will be till the last syllable of recorded time. Too often reckless, vain, and shallow, strutting in the glare of the fires he kindles; careless, so he throw large the shadow of his puny self. Yet not always; his kind are also man’s best friends, without whom life would be as dead as a pressed flower, yellow and crushed and scentless. Such, when they are true to the faith, put their trust in life, in man’s assertion of his right to be, in that old Adam who, from the first flicker of sentience and in the midst of the appalling tragedy of existence, has striven to endure, and in spite of all still goes on. Man’s upward course from the first amoeba which felt a conscious thrill, is no more than the effort to affirm the meanings of his own strange self, to divine his significance and to make it manifest in the little hour vouchsafed him.”

But it does not follow that the noisy, shallow critics must then be silenced. For who are we to judge the worth of what is said, and by what token are we to differentiate the Norton of Merry Mount from the Roger Williams? Far better to let them be, to let time judge; the first can never harm us, and the other, who should not be forced to seek elsewhere, will always redound to our credit. Even Massachusetts later had need of Williams, within his lifetime, and on numerous occasions he served and even saved the state that had expelled him.

The noisy reveler, the carping and dyspeptic critic, these but condemn themselves; well has it been said that “the fitting remedy for evil counsels is good ones.” In the words of Thomas Jefferson, “We have nothing to fear from the demoralizing reasonings of some, if others are left free to demonstrate their errors and especially when the law stands ready to punish the first criminal act produced by false reasonings.”

When the United Colonies in 1656 asked the Colony of the Providence Plantations to cease admitting Quakers, President Benedict Arnold and the magistrates replied, "that in those places where these people aforesaid in this Colony, are most of all suffered to declare themselves freely, and are only opposed by arguments in discourse, there they least of all desire to come, and we are informed that they begin to loathe this place, for that they are not opposed by the civil authority: and we surely find that they delight to be persecuted by civil powers, and when they are so they are like to gain more adherents by the conceit of their patient sufferings."

As persecution glorifies the oppressed, whether these be good or bad, so does it humble the persecutor. Who now remembers the Parliamentarians who burned *The Bloudy Tenent*? Who now can name the man who governed Massachusetts when that Colony banished Roger Williams? (It was not Winthrop.) His name is as the dust, but that of Williams lives. And yet the sentence of banishment still stands unrepealed, touched neither by the judgment of the world, nor by that decent gratitude which should have been the modest recompense for Williams' later services.

"The men whom I should be tempted to commemorate," says Mr. Justice Holmes, "would be the originators of transforming thought." Tonight, as we celebrate Roger Williams, I trust it will not seem unduly didactic if we attempt to extract a lesson from his example. I suggest that it is the futility of suppressing those who "hath broached & dyvulged dyvers newe and dangerous opinions"; and though perhaps that is not a popular notion, it will doubtless have more adherents in the next few years. For I venture to predict that we are at the threshold of a more tolerant decade, that we will respect more than heretofore the right of others to differ from us, and that we may perhaps even practice the precept of the great man whom tonight we praise. It is true, conditions are different. Where once

religious heresies were abhorred, it is now economic aberrations. But the principle is still the same; and indeed, the need of it is greater. When Roger Williams was hunted by Archbishop Laud, he could come to America; when the theocracy expelled him, he wandered to Seekonk; when Governor Winslow bade him leave, he came to Providence. But where can the soul go that is now troubled for conscience? There are no more vacant lands; there is nowhere now to go.

It is not love of the past alone that suggests we maintain the tradition of Roger Williams, nor is it solely antiquarianism that applauds the thoughts and doctrines of one so essentially modern, who saw the need for government and order, and at the same time recognized the necessity for self-expression. Here in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations we can do much worse than follow in the footsteps of our Founder; and if we do follow him, and so long as we do, we shall always, I trust, "hold forth a lively experiment."

Cheese Making in Old South County

By ALBERT E. LOWNES

Two hundred years ago South County was an area of great plantations. The soil, for the most part, was too rocky or too sandy for efficient cultivation, but the raising of live stock of all kinds flourished.

The growing of neat cattle naturally produced a surplus of milk, particularly during the summer months, and since the perishable nature of the product made shipment impossible under the conditions that then prevailed, it was not long before the settlers began to convert it into cheese. By the middle of the eighteenth century unbelievable quantities were made and exported, not only to the neighboring colonies, but to all parts of British America and to Europe, as well.

James McSparran, the beloved rector of St. Paul's in Narragansett, writes in his *America Dissected*: "The produce of this colony (Rhode Island) is principally butter and cheese, fat cattle, wool, and fine horses, that are exported to all parts of the English America."

Douglass, in 1760, says: "Rhode Island Colony in general, is a country pasture, not for grain. . . . It is noted for dairies, whence the best cheese made in any part of New England, is called (abroad) Rhode Island cheese. The most considerable farms are in the Narragansett country. Their highest dairy of one farm . . . milks about one hundred and ten cows, cuts two hundred loads of hay, makes about thirteen thousand pounds of cheese, besides butter, and sells off considerable in calves and fatted bullocks. A farmer from seventy-three milch cows in five months made ten thousand pounds of cheese."

These may well have been the greatest producers, but others were not far behind. Updike, on the authority of Isaac Peace Hazard, states that "N. Hazard kept 42 cows

and made 9,200 pounds of cheese" and that "Joseph N. Austin . . . kept 36 cows and made 8,000 pounds of cheese." Rowland Robinson is also cited as having "an immense dairy" and we are told that "one cow would average two pounds of cheese a day."

In addition to these great dairymen, there were many others who made cheese on a large, though more modest, scale. "College Tom" Hazard, whose records have been so carefully preserved for us by Miss Caroline Hazard, regularly sold over two thousand pounds of cheese a year and in some years almost doubled that figure.

Naturally, an industry of this magnitude had its effect on the general trade of the Colony,—especially since currency seems to have been one of the least stable of the commodities. We learn from Updike that rents were paid in produce and that "6000 pounds of cheese was equivalent to \$600 annual rent for years."

Updike tells us that "the wife of Richard Smith brought from Gloustershire to this country, the recipe for making the celebrated Cheshire cheese, and from this recipe the Narragansett was made in imitation of the Cheshire cheese, and it early gained for the table and market an established reputation for superior flavor and excellence." This must have been the wife of the first settler in Narragansett, who came from that county.

It seems hardly possible that cheese-making was possible at such an early date, but by the middle of the following century it was certainly well established and cheese continued to be a principal product of the Narragansett Country until after the Napoleonic Wars. Then butter increased in price while cheese declined, so that it became more profitable to use the cream for butter. Attempts were made to produce cheeses from skimmed milk, but they were of inferior quality and the industry languished and died early in the nineteenth century.

Cheese-making is a comparatively simple process. It was apparently, in the early days at least, done principally by

the female slaves and we learn that Robert Hazard, father of "College Tom," "had twelve negro women as dairy women, each of whom had a girl to assist her, making from twelve to twenty-four cheeses a day."

Directions and recipes for making cheese exist in many books of the period. They differ greatly in minor particulars but the general principle is the same.

The milk was set in pans and a little rennet was added to it—"just enough to make the curd come," to quote an old recipe. It was kept at blood heat until the curd was well formed—usually about half an hour. The curd was stirred with the hand until it was well set. It was then removed from the whey with a strainer and placed on a draining board. It was worked with the hands to remove as much of the whey as possible. Sometimes this operation was performed in a cheesecloth laid over a cheese-basket, which rested in turn on a cheese-ladder, placed over a pan or tub to catch the whey. More rarely a cheese-rack combined the functions of basket and ladder. After as much liquid as possible was removed from the curds by hand, they were salted and packed into a cheese-ring or hoop and placed in the press. A wooden disk, called the foller, fitted snugly on top of the curds to ensure even pressing. The hoop or ring had no bottom, but a similar device, called a vat, had a perforated wooden bottom. Isaac Peace Hazard recalled that his great-grandfather, Robert Hazard, had "cheese-vats of the second size" that "held nearly one bushel."

The cheese presses were of many sizes and types, from small table presses to great floor presses as tall as a man. All that I have seen of undoubted Rhode Island lineage made one cheese at a time, but at a later date multiple presses were developed. South County Museum has four presses, all different, and two others are in the writer's possession. Pressure was applied, in most cases, through a combination of pulleys and levers. A weight was attached to the end of the lever to give a constant pressure. One press, a small table press, is operated with wooden screws.

The cheese was pressed over night with moderate pressure. Then it was turned over and pressed on the other side. It was removed from the hoop and thoroughly coated with butter and salt and placed on a cheese-ladder on the cheese-house shelf to ripen. This took several months and during this period the cheese had to be turned over and buttered daily. Most of the cheese was made during July and August, but the turning and buttering continued until late in the fall.

Most of the cheese made in Rhode Island was "natural cheese," but some fancy cheeses were made by adding herbs or herb-teas to the curds to give color and flavor. Sage was most popular, but teas made by boiling young corn-husks or spinach gave a fine green color.

South County Museum has all of the equipment for making this famous cheese—the pails and pans and rings and follers, the vats and baskets and ladders, as well as the presses themselves. Unfortunately, good Mistress Smith's recipe is lost, but even if it were not it is doubtful if we could compete with the highly mechanized factories of New York and Wisconsin.

Cocumcussoc

The following explanation of the meaning of the Indian word Cocumcussoc is contained in an extract from a letter from Mr. W. B. Cabot* of Boston to Mr. J. Earl Clauson of Wickford, which appeared in the *Evening Bulletin* of October 3, 1934. Mr. Cabot wrote:

"Agreeing with you, I have never liked Trumbull's connecting Cocumcusset with Devil's Foot. 'A grass marsh,' meaning seems the one to me; more exactly, two succeeding marshes, possibly more than two. The form appears in Cocumpaugh, a pond in Charlestown, but applied to ponds instead of marshes.

"As a matter of notation I think Trumbull's accepting 'cocum' for 'kikum' is unjustified as the sounds represented don't seem to approach each other in their dialects."

Notes

Mrs. Herbert W. Rice has been elected to membership in the Society.

*See *R. I. H. S. Collections* for April, 1929, for Cabot's explanation of the meaning of other local Indian place names.

New Publications of Rhode Island Interest

An Article by Canon A. A. Luce entitled *Berkeley's Bermuda Project and His Benefactions to American Universities, with Unpublished Letters and Extracts from the Egmont Papers* appears in the August, 1934, issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*.

History and Trees of the Jenks Family by Charles N. Jenks is a 41 page pamphlet.

An article* by Coe Hayne, entitled *The Long Trail of the Brothertowns* traces the descent of Hannah Garret, wife of David Fowler, "the Mercury of the Indian School" from Momojashuck, brother of Ninigret, thus connecting the Narragansett-Niantics with the Brothertown Indians of Wisconsin.

*R. I. H. S. Scrap Book Vol. 31, p. 69.

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